

Resources for Farming with Buffers

Agriculture and Natural Resources Fact Sheet #529

Buffers are areas well stabilized with vegetation that separate streams from fields and pastures. Although they come in many forms including filter strips, field borders, stream buffers, grassed waterways, shelterbelts, etc., buffers serve to intercept the flow of stormwater runoff from fields, and trap particles of sediment, nutrients and other potential pollutants in runoff. Buffers also enhance wildlife habitat and protect biodiversity. Riparian or stream buffers are especially important as critical habitat for many aquatic species of wildlife including salmon and bull trout. Buffers work best when implemented as part of a systems approach to conservation. They are especially effective when combined with nutrient management programs, integrated pest management, and conservation tillage.

Stream restoration and protection projects can be complex and typically require the help of trained personnel. Permits are required for work near streams. Input from biologists, engineers, landscape architects and planners before, during, and after buffer projects will help ensure the success of your efforts. Fortunately, many resources are available, often free of charge. Some resources for farming with buffers, including incentive programs, are provided here. Keep in mind, however, as rules and regulations change information needs will too.

Establishing buffers is not without costs. Site preparation, planting and weed control are a few initial expenses. The cost of taking land out of production is a major concern to small-scale farmers in Western Washington. Some financial incentives may be available. Contact the organizations below for information about buffers on your property.



Organizations

King Conservation District

935 Powell Ave SW, Renton, WA 98055; (206) 764-3410; email: district@kingcd.org; web: <http://www.kingcd.org/>. All landowners within the District boundaries are entitled to free information and technical assistance for water quality protection, wildlife habitat enhancement, farm management plans, soil and slope stability information, native plant products, manure exchange information, volunteer opportunities, stream restoration/enhancement assistance and many other natural resource topics.

King County Department of Natural Resources Water and Land Resources

201 S. Jackson Street, Suite 600, Seattle, WA 98104, (206) 296-6519; web: <http://splash.metrokc.gov/wlr/index.htm>.

Agriculture Program

Eric K. Nelson, (206) 296-1469; email: eric-k.nelson@metrokc.gov.

The Agriculture Program brings together the County's previous efforts to preserve prime agricultural soils (Farmlands Preservation Program) with recent efforts to make agriculture more environmentally friendly (the Livestock Management Ordinance) and future programs to encourage the activity of agriculture.

Basin Steward Program

(206) 296-6519

The King County Water and Land Resources (WLR) Division is working with area residents to develop basin management plans for many of the County's most complex and resource-rich watersheds. Such plans can include buffers. To help implement these plans, Water and Land Resources has assigned Basin Stewards to specific watersheds. Call to find out who the Basin Steward is for your watershed.

Washington Department of Ecology

Northwest Regional Office, 3190 - 160th Ave. SE, Bellevue, WA 98008-5452; (425) 649-7000; web: <http://www.wa.gov/ecology/>.

Information on permits, grants, and loans.

US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

South Puget Sound FSA Office, 1011 East Main Ave. Suite 406, Puyallup, WA 98372-6768; George Jaquish (253) 445-9899; email: George.R.Jaquish@county.fsa.usda.gov; web: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/EDSO/wa/spsfsa.htm>.

Provides cost-share assistance to landowners for projects such as streambank stabilization and riparian enhancement.

National Agroforestry Center (NAC)

East Campus - UNL, Lincoln, NE 68583-0822
(402) 437-5178; email: jwimmer/rmrs_lincoln@fs.fed.us;
web: <http://www.unl.edu/nac/>.

A partnership of the USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. NAC is a pioneering program designed to accelerate the development of agroforestry, a science and practice that integrates agriculture and forestry land uses.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

935 Powell Avenue SW, Renton, WA 98055;
(206) 764-3325; email: district@kingcd.org;
web: <http://www.kingcd.org/>.

NRCS is a non-regulatory agency with a long history of working with streambank stabilization projects and buffer strips. The NRCS has expertise in the area of conservation plantings and erosion control.

NRCS National Conservation Buffer Initiative Program launched in 1997 by USDA pledging to help landowners install 2 million miles of conservation buffers by year 2002. Seven private sector firms have pledged more than \$1 million over three years to complement USDA's efforts to promote the acceptance of conservation buffers among producers. See Incentive and Funding Sources section for cost share programs.

Conservation Technology Information Center

1220 Potter Dr. Rm 170, West Lafayette, IN 47906-1383;
(765) 494-9555; email: ctic@ctic.purdue.edu; web: <http://www.ctic.purdue.edu>.

CTIC is a nonprofit, information and data transfer center which promotes agriculture that uses environmentally and economically beneficial natural resource systems. Publishes a quarterly newsletter called *Partners*.

Income Opportunities

Special Forest Products (SFPs)

WSU Cooperative Extension Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific and Thurston Counties

Contact Jim Freed, Special Forest Products Area Faculty, US Forest Service, 1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Olympia, WA 98512-5623; (360) 956-2272; email: freedj@wsu.edu; web: <http://www.midpacific.wsu.edu/forest/>.

Web site has publications on various aspects of the special forest products industry including: *Setting Personal Harvesting Goals (Earning a Daily Income)*, *Kinds of Direct Markets for Special Forest Products*, *Specialty Forest Products - Past, Present, & Future Markets*, and more.

Northwest Natural Resources Group

PO Box 1067, Port Townsend, WA 98368; (360) 379-9421; email: larry@nnrg.org; web: <http://www.nnrg.org/>.

Offers SFP Harvester Training and Certification. This project provides a positive incentive for both harvesters and landowners to practice ecologically sound management and harvesting of SFPs by demonstrating the values of

conservation based business enterprise to a broad cross section of people and firms in the SFP industry. This will be achieved by providing Best Management Practices (BMP) training to harvesters and setting up an ecological certification program under the auspices of the international Forest Stewardship Council.

Incentives and Funding Sources

King County Livestock Cost-Sharing Program

Laurie Clinton, email: laurie.clinton@metrokc.gov;
(206) 296-1471.

Up to \$2500 per landowner is available to assist with the implementation of Best Management Practices called for in an approved Farm Management Plan. Buffer fencing, buffer revegetation, crossing and watering points and alternative watering systems are just a few of the practices available for cost-sharing under this program. In order to be eligible for cost-sharing you must have a Farm Management Plan designed by the King Conservation District for your property, and the practices applied for must be prescribed in the plan. Call for more information and an application.

Urban Reforestation and Habitat Restoration Grant Fund

King County Wildlife Program, Resource Lands Section
Kate Stenberg, 201 S. Jackson, Ste 600, Seattle, WA 98104-3854; (206) 296-7266; email: kate.stenberg@metrokc.gov.

The Urban Reforestation and Habitat Restoration (URHR) grants provide funds to volunteer organizations, community groups and government agencies for reforestation and habitat restoration projects within the urban growth area of King County.

USDA, NRCS Conservation Programs

935 Powell Ave SW, Renton, WA 98055; (206) 764-3325; email: district@kingcd.org; web site for all programs: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/NRCSProg.html>.

These programs provide incentive opportunities to implement conservation measures to prevent soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide wildlife habitat.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Enhances and protects water quality, fish habitat and stream stability through the use of riparian buffers. The program is designed to compensate landowners for being good land stewards and it helps address concerns about the Endangered Species Act. Cost sharing and annual payments are the main benefits of this program. Buffer boundaries can be moved toward or away from streams as long as the average width meets the buffer standard.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with Federal, State, and tribal environmental laws, and encour-

ages environmental enhancement. Fifty percent of the funding available for the program will be targeted at natural resource concerns relating to livestock production.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Provides financial incentives to develop habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands. Participants agree to implement a wildlife habitat development plan and USDA agrees to provide cost-share assistance for the initial implementation of wildlife habitat development practices. USDA and program participants enter into a cost-share agreement for wildlife habitat development. This agreement generally lasts a minimum of 10 years from the date that the contract is signed.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection beyond that which can be obtained through any other USDA program.

Agricultural Wetlands Trust

Agriculture Conservation Innovation Center (ACIC)
2234 So. Hobson Ave., Charleston, SC 29405; (843) 740-1325; web: <http://www.agconserv.com/>.

ACIC is a nonprofit organization affiliated with the Natural Resources Council of America. ACIC proposes to establish a fee-based wetland mitigation program called the Agricultural Wetlands Trust. The goal of the Trust is to provide environmentally sound, economically efficient wetland mitigation opportunities for farming activities regulated in Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and the 1996 Farm Bill.

Watershed Action Grants Program

Donna Kalka (206) 296-8494; <http://splash.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/grants.htm>

Provides funds to community groups, schools, service clubs, and homeowner associations in King County to encourage watershed protection or enhancement of surface water or wastewater resources. Call for current information.

Mid-Sound Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group

7400 Sand Point Way NE Bldg 30 Rm 202 Seattle, WA 98115; (206) 529 9467; email: midsound@nwlink.com.

Funds projects in the mid-Sound region related to salmon enhancement and preservation; i.e., stream rehabilitation, habitat repair, environmental enhancement, remote site incubators, net pens, plant salvages, conservation easements and other related activities. This group is one of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife's 12 regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups.

King County Wastewater Treatment Division

King County WaterWorks Grants

201 South Jackson, Suite 503, Seattle, WA 98104

Ken Pritchard (206) 296-8265; <http://splash.metrokc.gov/wlr/waterres/wsf/wsinfo.htm>.

Individual grants up to \$50,000 are available for projects that protect or improve watersheds, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and tidewater. Projects must provide opportunities for stewardship. There are several funding cycles each year. Call for application deadline dates.

South Sound Regional Enhancement Group

P.O. Box 636, Olympia, WA 98507-0636; Blake Smith, Projects Development Committee Chair (360) 845-9225.

Funds are available to groups and individuals committed to increasing salmon populations in the south Puget Sound region through habitat restoration, community education, and fish production activities.

Puget Consumers Co-op (PCC)

10718 NE 68th St., Kirkland, WA 98033; contact Nancy Gagnat at (206) 547-1222 ext.127; email:

nancyg@pccsea.com.

Not-for-profits can apply to PCC's Membership Community Grant Program for local/organic agriculture, hunger efforts, recycling, environmental protection, nutrition, etc.

Examples of Buffers

Many farmers in King County are taking steps to provide buffers beyond what is currently required by regulations as a means to help in the recovery of salmon and to benefit other wildlife. For information about such efforts contact King Conservation District (206) 764-3410 or Eric Nelson at King County Department of Natural Resources (206) 296-1469.

Publications

Agroforestry for Farms and Ranches - Agroforestry Technical Note No. 1, July, 1996. USDA. NRCS. Ecological Sciences Division. NRCS Attn: Conservation Communications Staff, PO Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013; web: http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/tech_notes.html. An introduction to using tree and shrub practices in sustained agricultural systems. Includes information on different types of buffers.

Buffers, Common-Sense Conservation, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Conservation Buffer Team.

How to Design a Riparian Buffer for Agricultural Land, Agroforestry Notes - Riparian #2. National Agroforestry Center, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Station, USDA, NRCS.

Riparian Buffers for Agricultural Land, Agroforestry Notes Jan. 1997. National Agroforestry Center, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Station, USDA, NRCS.

A Riparian Buffer Design for Cropland, Agroforestry Notes January 1997. National Agroforestry Center, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Station, USDA, NRCS.

Riparian Buffer Systems in Crop and Rangelands. R. Schultz, T. Isenhardt, and J. Colletti. 1994. Agroforestry and Sustainable Systems: Symposium Proceedings, August 1994.

Riparian Forest Buffer Conservation Practice Job Sheet, April 1997, National Agroforestry Center, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Station, USDA, NRCS.

Tips on Land and Water Management for Small Farm and Livestock Owners in Western Washington. King Conservation District, 935 Powell Ave SW, Renton, WA 98055; (206) 764-3410.

Native Plants

Going Native! A Guide to Creating Your Own Native Plant Buffer. Brochure by King County Department of Natural Resources. Outlines process for planning and planting buffers, includes native plant list, shows sample planting plans.

Streamside Planting Guide for Western Washington. Cowlitz Conservation District and Harza Northwest Inc. Includes information on watershed planning, project planning, riparian vegetation, planting procedures, maintenance, instream habitat enhancement and other resources.

Special Forest Products

Edible Wild Mushrooms. MNEB357. Available from WSU Cooperative Extension King County. Call (206) 296-3900 to purchase copies.

A Guide To Floral Greens: Special Forest Products EB 1659. Available from WSU Cooperative Extension King County. Call (206) 296-3900 to purchase copies.

Income Opportunities in Special Forest Products: Self-Help Suggestions for Rural Entrepreneurs. 1993. By M. Thomas and R. Schumann, Agriculture Information Bulletin AIB-666, USDA, Washington DC.

Selling Your Special Forest Products, ICPP 106 - \$3.00 Find out how to market special forest products such as floral greens, dwarf Oregon-grape, deer fern, scotch broom, salal, Oregon boxwood, sword fern, evergreen huckleberry, beargrass, as well as wild mushrooms, mosses, Cascara bark, and pine cones. Available from WSU Cooperative Extension Island County. Call (360) 679-7327 to purchase copies.

**Alternate formats available upon request.
206-205-3100 (TTY 711)**

No endorsement is intended of any businesses listed in this fact sheet, nor is criticism of unnamed businesses implied. Written by [Sylvia Kantor](#), WSU Cooperative Extension King County, 1999. Reviewed by Marilyn Freeman, WSU Cooperative Extension King County; Elizabeth Welden, King Conservation District; and Eric K. Nelson, King County Department of Natural Resources.

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